PRESS RELEASE

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INTERIM STABILIZATION OF HANFORD FACILITY COMPLETE

Completion Beats Tri Party Agreement Milestone for River Protection Office And CH2M HILL Hanford Group

The U.S. Department of Energy Office of River Protection (ORP) and its tank farms contractor, CH2M HILL Hanford Group, Inc. (CH2M HILL) are finished ahead of schedule with the interim stabilization of a facility that was once used to transfer waste between nuclear materials processing buildings and large underground waste tanks at the Hanford Site in southeastern Washington State.

To complete the interim stabilization of the facility, CH2M HILL workers pumped approximately 18,000 gallons of radioactive and hazardous waste from the facility, known as 244-AR Vault, into Hanford's double shell tanks. Once the waste was removed from the facility, crews isolated process and transfer piping into the facility, plugged drains, and flushed a transfer system left in place to remove liquids that may get into the facility in the future.

The facility was to be interim stabilized by September 30, 2003 under the Tri Party Agreement, the legal pact guiding the clean up of the Hanford Site. ORP sent a letter to the Washington State Department of Ecology on August 18, 2003 announcing completion of the interim stabilization work.

"This is another step toward reducing the risk that tank wastes pose to the environment," said ORP Manager Roy Schepens. "By completing projects like this early, we can shift our resources to other work in Hanford's tank farms such as the retrieval of salt and sludge wastes from single shell tanks."

"The teamwork between ORP and CH2M HILL moved this difficult and complicated task through to completion," said CH2M HILL Hanford Group President Ed Aromi. "This model is serving us well as we work to meet or beat the milestones ahead of us."

Constructed between 1966 and 1968, the 100 foot-long, concrete-walled 244-AR Vault was used until the early 1990s to ensure safe waste transfers between Hanford facilities that processed irradiated nuclear fuel, specifically the Plutonium Uranium Extraction Plant and B Plant, and the Hanford tanks. Sodium hydroxide was added in the 244-AR facility to make the waste from the processing plants less acidic, so the waste wouldn't corrode the steel walls of Hanford tanks.

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Years of past processing and water intrusions into the facility left hazardous and radioactive waste in four different tanks in the facility and in a secondary containment system. The 244-AR cleanup project focused initially on consolidating that waste into one of the facility's tanks. Sampling was done to verify compatibility with Hanford's double-shell tanks prior to transferring the 244-AR waste to Hanford's underground storage tanks.

CH2M HILL is ORP's prime contractor with responsibility for retrieving for treatment and disposing of approximately 53 million gallons of radioactive and hazardous waste stored in 177 underground tanks. ORP's other prime contractor Bechtel National, Inc. is building the Waste Treatment Plant that will immobilize in glass Hanford's high-level tank waste.

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